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Making Sense of the *Spolia* in the Little Metropolis in Athens

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Dwarfed by the large modern Metropolis of Athens, stands the unique small church (7,32 x 11,38 m) known as the Little Metropolis, Agios Eleutherios and, especially, Panagia Gorgoepikoos.[1] This domed cross-in-square church is conspicuous for its exterior, which displays a large number of sculpted *spolia*, both ancient and medieval. The building is not dated on external evidence, and suggested dates have ranged from the 9th to the 13th century. Today it is generally believed to belong to the later 12th century, perhaps ca. 1182-1204, on the assumption that the commissioner was the learned Metropolitan Michael Choniates. In this article a different conclusion is reached with regard to the chronology, and consequently, the meaning and significance of the church.[2]

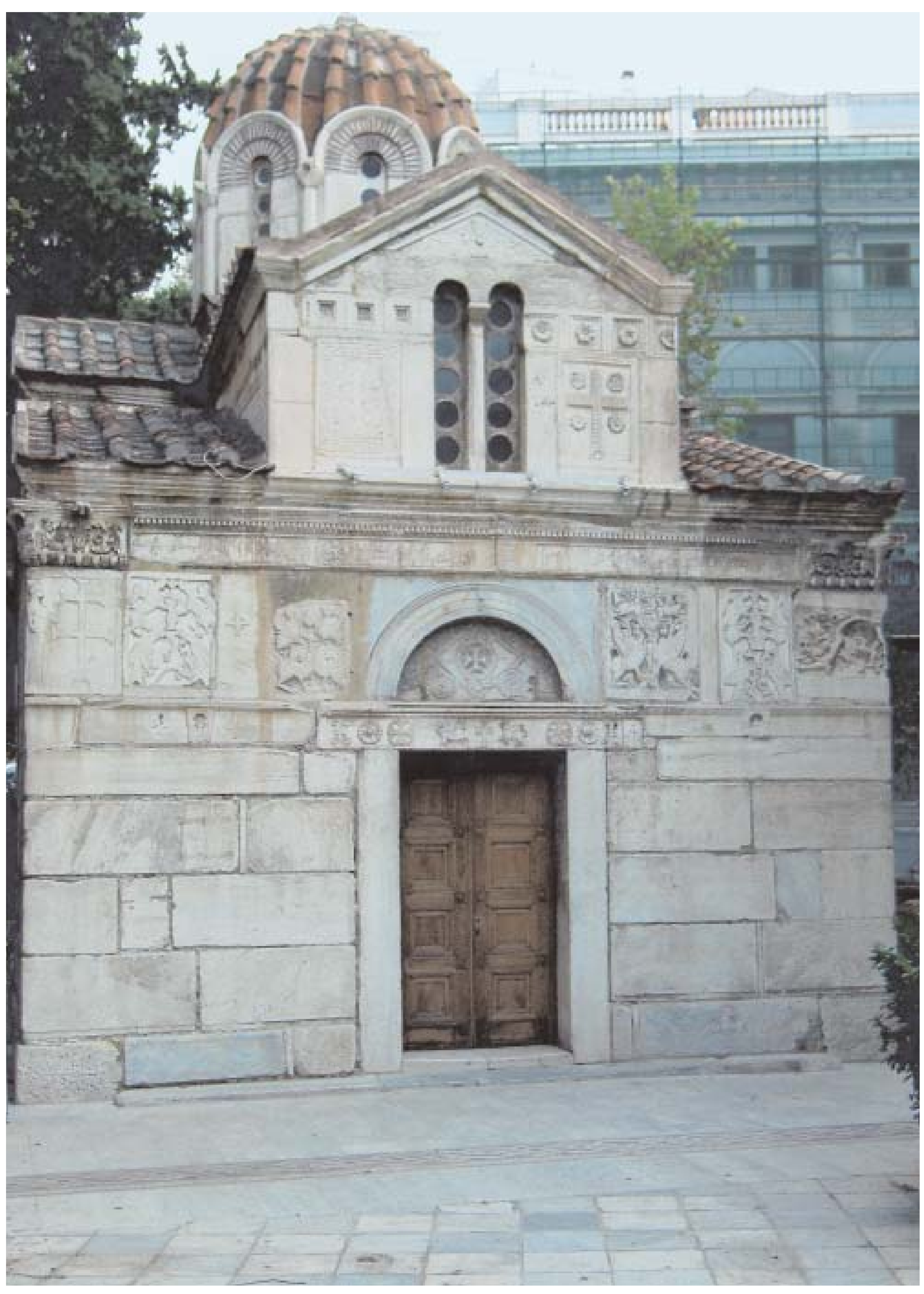
Most middle Byzantine churches in Athens are built in accord with the conventional building methods of alternating courses of stone and brick, brick-lined stone (*cloisonné*), or rubble. They incorporate *spolia* only in the form of restrained reuse of columns and capitals, a lintel or various odd pieces.[3] The Panagia Gorgoepikoos follows a different building method; its art historical significance lies in the fact that it is constructed almost entirely out of reused marble blocks and incorporates much figural material [1-4].[4] This massive use of *spolia* is without parallel in Greece or elsewhere, neither in the Middle Ages and nor at any other time.[5] The building material consists of large recycled ashlar blocks (their average height is about two feet). Most are of Pentelic marble, but there is also some use of bluish Hymettos marble and limestone. The ashlar blocks are well laid, in close to isodomic courses in the tradition of Greek antiquity, but they are joined with mortar; they may derive from a temple or, equally well, from some other building of sacred or secular function. The homogeneity of the stones indicates that the majority stem from a common source. It is uncertain whether originally there was a temple beneath the Little Metropolis, but there are countless derelict edifices that may have served as a quarry for the building material.[6] The upper part of the exterior is composed of numerous sculpted *spolia*, both Christian and pagan. It is these (about ninety) *spolia* that make the church so special and worth further discussion.

Presentation of the *Spolia*

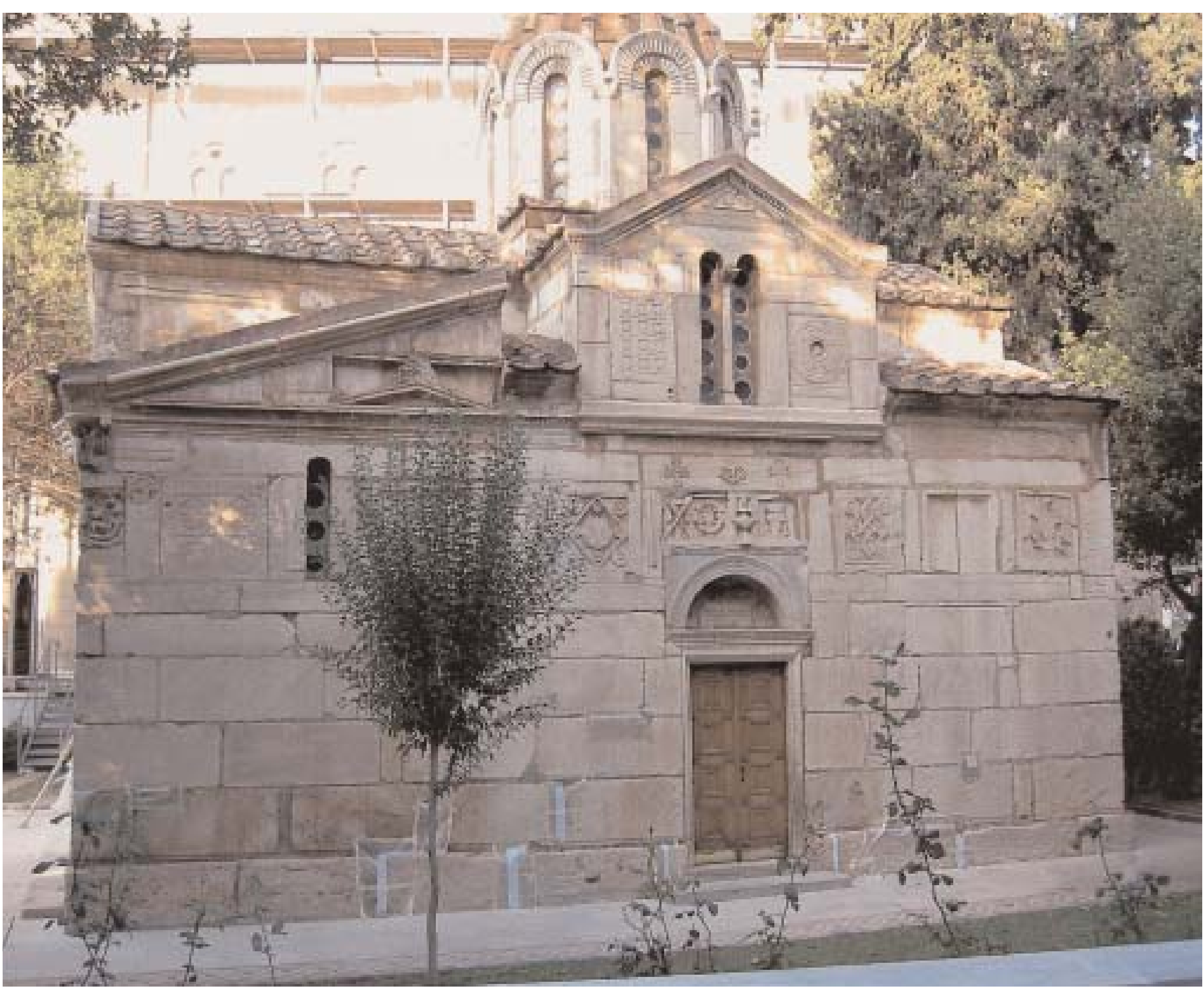
The reliefs are integrated into all four façades of the exterior, beginning in the sixth or seventh course, at a height of ca. 2,65 m at the front, and ca. 3,10 m at the flanks. There is an interesting mixture of antique and Byzantine sculpture, with, at one extreme, Classical reliefs, and at the other, some pieces that must have been comparatively new around 1200, when the church is supposed to have been built. It is neither possible, nor necessary, to discuss each and every piece, although an updated catalogue is certainly wanting.[7] Nonetheless, in order to show the wealth of imagery and, not least, to try to find whatever principle, if any, may lie behind choice and arrangement, it is pertinent to survey the material *in toto*, instead of simply selecting a few outstanding pieces. Although this may be tedious, only by doing so, can one get an idea of the nature of the *spolia*. In the following section brief mention will be made of the sculptured reliefs and fragments I have been able to observe *in situ*; a few smaller fragments may have been overlooked.[8]

Starting on the west front, on the gable [5], from top to bottom, it is possible to note the following: (W 1) leaves growing from a *kantharus*, (W 2) an intricate, interlaced carpet-like pattern which is intersected by the window, and (W 3) remains of coffers arranged in a row, those on the right with plastic rosettes. On either side of the window are two Byzantine reliefs: upright slabs with respectively (W 4) a cross flanked by animals and (W 5) an interlaced cross framed by rosettes. At both corners on the wall below [6] there are: (W 6) and (W 7) Roman Corinthian pilaster capitals. Along the front runs (W 8) an ancient cornice with dentils. Below the cornice and over the doors has been placed (W 9) a long Greek (or Roman) calendar frieze to which crosses at places have been added.[9] At the northwest end, below the pilaster capital, is (W 10) a Greek relief showing a woman in profile facing a large double cross (*crux gemina*). Symmetrically arranged around the tympanum are four Byzantine reliefs with heraldically disposed animals: (W 11) two gryphons flanking a tree of life and two peacocks fighting snakes; (W 12) two sphinxes and two lions flanking tree of life; (W 13) two large sphinxes symmetrically disposed on either side of a tree of life, the branches of which are inhabited by a smaller pair of lions with human heads; (W 14) a composition much like (W 11). At the southwest corner and positioned below the pilaster capital, is (W 15) a fragment of a Roman peopled scroll disclosing among other figures a woman riding on a swan. The tympanum consists of (W 16) an interlaced lozenge with central cross and rosettes. The lintel is constructed from (W 17) a block with two lions flanking a cross, and with more crosses and rosettes at each end. On both sides of the lintel, the *spolia* (W 18) and (W 19) show a cross in *aedicula* flanked by other cross symbols.

Turning to the south flank, on the gable [7] there is: (S 1) a small triangular relief with what looks like a satyr's mask; under this is (S 2) a one-line inscription. Below this inscription is (S 3) a floral scroll, and (S 4) a large block with three incised crosses. This block, which is interrupted by the window, is framed by (S 5) and (S 6) fragments of close-set wavy lines. On one side of the window is (S 7) an oblong block with a foliate cross, and astragal, cable and rope pattern placed upside down; on the other side of the window is (S 8) a block with a rosette cross. The large upright slabs framing the window consist of (S 9) an elaborate design of interlaced stylized acanthus in a grid pattern, and (S 10) an interlaced circle. A large profiled block [8] (S 11) carrying a two- line inscription (IG III^2 6419) forms part of the epistyle. On the wall, from west to east, next to the scroll fragment at the corner is (S 12) a block with an ornamental leaf, (S 13) a foliate cross turned 90 degrees, (S 14) a panel with a large stepped cross flanked by rosettes and whirlwinds, and (S 15) a large framed empty panel. Next is (S 16) a slab with a lozenge and rosettes. Over the doorway rests: [9] (S 17) an oblong block with three crosses. Below this, forming a lintel, is (S 18) part of an ancient triglyph-metope frieze with paraphernalia relating to the Eleusinian cult. In the tympanum stands (S 19) a *crux gemina*. On the eastern side of the door is



1. Athens, Little Metropolis, western façade.



2. Athens, Little Metropolis, southern façade.

(S 20) a slab with a fine interlaced banded lozenge and rosettes. This is followed by (S 21) another empty panel. Finally, at the southeast end is the only figural relief on the south side: (S 22) an eagle with a hare. The most peculiar feature of the southern side is the seemingly haphazard insertion at roof level of (S 23) the top of a palmetto-crowned stele.

On the northern flank [3], the gable presents (N 1) a *kantharus* with a leafy growth, (N 2) a frieze with Maltese crosses in low relief, and (N 3) a large isoscelic cross in the centre of an oblong block. This block is interrupted by the cuttings for the window, which also cuts through (N 4) a frieze of six-petalled roses. Flanking the window are: (N 5) a slab with a foliate cross and (N 6) a slab with a flared cross inscribed in a lozenge. On the wall, viewing from east to west, one will note: (N 7) a panel with a naked man or satyr (the tail is not visible) flanked by two large flared stepped crosses, (N 8) one and a half coffers, (N 9) a relief with two *oinochoai* on shields, each inscribed with a Maltese cross. In the central part of the wall, below the window, runs (N 10) a palmetto frieze with cross inserted in the center. The following oblong blocks show (N 11) incised Maltese cross and four-petalled rosettes, (N 12) foliate cross *in aedicula*, and (N 13) a Maltese cross and four-petalled rosettes. The tympanum is empty of decoration. The lintel [17] is composed of two narrow bands: (N 14) a stylized palmetto inscribed in interlaced squares alternating with lotus in interlaced circles, and, directly below, (N 15) a stylized palmetto with a cross in the centre. The door frame (N 16) is decorated with a scroll. Turning to the large slabs on the western part of the northern flank, these present: (N 17) a large Maltese cross inscribed in a circle in very low relief, and (N 18) a Roman grave stele with two frontal women, a small cross is inserted between their heads [12]. A frieze (N 19) of low relief peacocks and other figures runs below these two panels. Next comes (N 20) an upright slab with two crosses. The final two panels depict: (N 21) a foliate cross framed by multi-petalled rosettes, and (N 22) a symmetrical design of a square with an intricate pattern of stylised palmettos. The upper left corner of this slab has been replaced by a fragment that did not originally belong to it.

The gable of the eastern facade [4] incorporates (E 1) a small *aedicula* with a seated *Kybele*, framed by (E 2) floral scrolls. Below this runs (E 3) a palmetto frieze of Roman date. At each extremity are two small reliefs (E 4) and (E 5) each shows a *Nike* and a female figure with a tripod. On the wall (E 6) a large relief with inscribed prizes, and a long inscription (IG III, 1, 128) referring to victory and to one *Markus Tullius* is turned 90 degrees. Below this, along the edge, is (E 7) a smaller victory-relief with laurel wreaths. Next to this is (E 8) a Byzantine panel showing a combat between a lion and a spotted animal. The exterior of the apse is densely set with carved reliefs: (E 9) a simple grid, (E 10) a fragment of an ancient relief with one and



3. Athens, Little Metropolis, northern façade.

a half male figures, carrying shield and spear. This fragment is set at 90 degrees. Below it is a Byzantine relief (E 11) of the lozenge with rosettes type. The end wall of the apse displays: (E 12) a slab with a leaved double-cross in an *aedicula* framed by a foliate scroll, and, intersected by the window, (E 13) a balustrade-like panel with a cross inscribed in a circle, set into a geometrical design. Between the slab and the balustrade-panel is (E 14) a block with a barely legible Greek inscription (IG II[2] 3038) referring to a Choregic victory. This is placed upside down.[10] The third, northern, side of the apse shows (E 15) yet another fragment of palmetto frieze (cf. E 3) set at 90 degrees. Next to it is (E 16) an elaborate Byzantine slab of interlaced cross flanked by sphinxes and peacocks. The panel below (E 17) has a cross with rosettes. At the very top of the northern part of the east end there is (E 18) a small fragment of vegetal design, then (E 19) two stretches of imbrication from a sarcophagus turned upside down; below are two large upright panels, depicting respectively (E 20) an interlaced lozenge and (E 21) a whirlwind inscribed in an interlaced circle. At the edge of the wall is (E 22) an ancient relief with laurel wreaths identical to the one at the opposite edge (E 7) [25].

In addition, it should be mentioned that *spolia* frame the three doors of the inner narthex: the jambs and the lintels of these consist of no less than eight different ornaments.[11]

As this survey shows, the church displays a bewildering range of imagery, comprising figural, ornamental and epigraphical blocks, of both ancient and particularly medieval origin.

The Arrangement and Display of the *Spolia*

One of the characteristic features of the *spolia* in the Panagia Gorgoepikoos is the care that has been taken to make them as visible as possible. Except for a few pieces that are difficult to make out, all reliefs can be fully beheld. It is as if the designer not only wanted to make a visual impression by the very quantity of images, but he also intended the individual pieces to be clearly seen. This is an ostentatious display. None of the *spolia* however are within easy reach; they have been arranged along the upper parts of the walls, mainly as a pseudo-frieze of large slabs, with further emphasis on gables and the central axis. Many pieces, both medieval and ancient, are of approximately equal size: large, rectangular panels of the types familiar from chancel screens. Although there are exceptions, the chosen reliefs do not, as a rule, violate the overall harmony of the wall surfaces, and a certain symmetry or rhythm appears to have been aimed for.

Doors are obvious focal points. In many medieval churches, both eastern and western, only the doorways have been embellished with a *spolium*, usually in the form of a lintel.[12] In the Gorgoepikoos, *spolia* highlight or frame the three doorways, the sizes of which vary significantly (west door 2,49 x 1,44 m; south door 2,14 x 1,34 m; north door 1,85 m x 1,34 m).[13] The relative size of the door possibly reflects the relative importance attributed to the three façades. It is worth noting how the doorways have been treated differently, one being crowned by the characteristic Eleusinian frieze [9], another by the calendar frieze [6]. The doorjambs of the main entrance consist of two



4. Athens, Little Metropolis, eastern façade.

marble monoliths, impressive for their height (of 2,6 m, i.e., roughly equalling eight ancient Attic feet). A conspicuous feature of the northern flank is the distinctive marking of the central axis, with no less than seven crosses of different design.

Just as the doorways have been treated differently, there are apparent differences in the way the four façades as a whole have been layed out [1-4]. The front and apsidal walls are the most elaborate: the eastern wall stands out due to the closely knit reliefs that cover most of the surface with a fine texture of mostly symbolic imagery. The flanks display a different character: to the south there are no human figures, all reliefs except one – the eagle and the hare (S 22) – are nonfigurative; they seem to have been set almost at random. Finally, on the northern side, perhaps the less exciting one, the reliefs are more sparse and give a first impression of having been composed partly of 'leftovers'.

A principle for the placement of the pagan sculpture is discernible: On the front the ancient pieces frame the upper part of the wall; they define limits, they are 'images on the edge'.[14] Their marginal position is hardly coincidental, as this principle also applies to the eastern and southern walls with ancient images being placed along the edge, at the apex and over the door. Meanwhile, the principle is less discernible on the northern side. However, rather than a specific signification, the main reason for placing the ancient works in this manner could be structural: in contrast to the comparatively thin Byzantine slabs, the massive ancient blocks serve well to reinforce the weaker points of the structure.

On the eastern façade [4] some ancient *spolia* – both figural (E 10) [10], ornamental (E 15) and with inscriptions (E 6) – have been turned 90 degrees or placed upside down (E 14). One could read this subversion as a way of negating the significance and power of the imagery.[15] Yet it may equally well be dictated by practical reasons, and be due simply to the fact that, at this spot, one needed an upright block.

REWORKING

Some *spolia* have been inserted without any modifications, this applies in particular to the Byzantine reliefs, the decorative ancient elements and to the plain blocks, but also to some ancient figural reliefs. Other *spolia* have been modified in various ways ranging from a slight retouching to more drastic interventions, i.e., they are bisected, encroached upon by windows, also even entire figures have been removed. The satyr (N 7) appears to have been castrated (but this might have happened long before insertion into the church) – this is a mutilation which, from the archaeological point of view, constitutes a minor retouch, but from the satyr's point of view it constitutes a drastic intervention [11]. Certain ancient pieces have, at some point in time, been provided with one or more crosses. Thus the satyr is framed by two large crosses (N 7), a small cross is inserted between the two figures on the grave stele (N 18) [12], a large cross is hewn next to the standing female figure (W 10) [13], and crosses intersperse the cal-

5. *Athens, Little Metropolis, western gable,* spolia *W 1- W 5.*

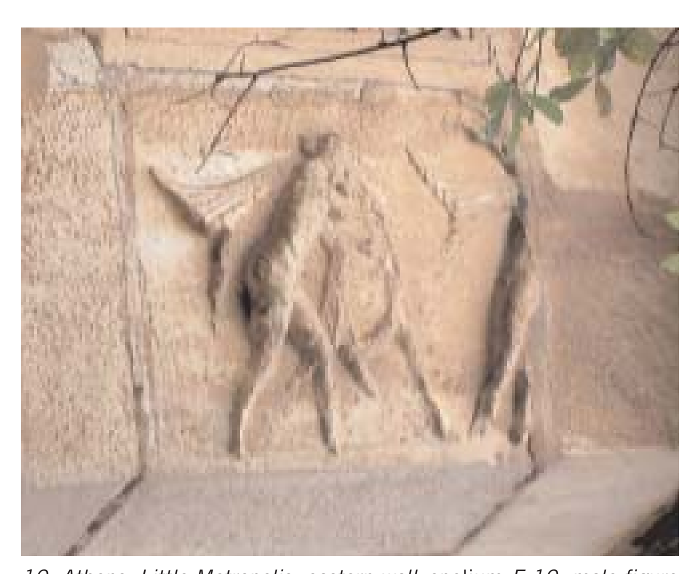
6. *Athens, Little Metropolis, upper part of the western wall,* spolia *W 6 - W 19.*

7. Athens, Little Metropolis, southern gable, spolia *S 1 - S 10.*



8. Athens, Little Metropolis, southwest corner, spolia *S 11 - S 14.*

9. Athens, Little Metropolis, southern wall, spolia *S 17 - S 20.*



10. Athens, Little Metropolis, eastern wall, spolium *E 10, male figure set at 90 degrees in the wall.*



11. Athens, Little Metropolis, northern wall, satyr panel, N 7.

endar frieze at three points (W 9). This practice, known as *sphragis*, is a way of changing the pagan aspect, of neutralizing and of, so to speak, baptising the object.[16] By placing one or more crosses on or near a pagan object, potential evil forces loose their power.[17]

With regard to the *sphragis*, it is worth noting that while the figural pieces on the western and northern sides have all been provided with crosses, this is not the case on the eastern side. As far as I can tell, the *Kybele* (E 1) and the two small reliefs depicting a woman and a *Nike* (E 4 and 5) and the man with a shield (E 10) [10] have been inserted without any modification at all. Whether this is due to their smaller size and less conspicuous position must be left open. Furthermore, the crosses added to the ancient stones do not conform to one single type: represented are *Stufen-Kreuz* with flared arms (N 7), *crux gemina* or double cross (W 10), a small simple Latin cross (N 18) and Maltese crosses in circles (W 9, N 9). The symbols placed on the antique pieces therefore are of different types and also differ from most of those appearing on the Byzantine material, such as *crux florida*, the banded cross, and the interlaced cross

[14]. A more precise dating of the inserted crosses is difficult, but most types are documented quite early.[18] While I am not implying that the signs carved on the pagan pieces are pre-iconoclastic, the important point is that they do not necessarily all date from the period when the church was erected. Since not all pagan pieces have been subject to christening, and since the calendar frieze presents a rather peculiar distribution of crosses, with three on the left section, but none on the right, the builders of the Panagia Gorgoepikoos may not have been all that concerned with christianising pagan imagery. The fact that the Christian sign has not been systematically added to all the ancient pieces might suggest that some of these interventions belong to a previous phase of reemployment.

The Date of the *Spolia*

The *spolia* span roughly one and a half millennium. About one fourth of the sculpted reliefs pre-date the Herulian incursion of 267 A.D.; a little more than three fourth are of medieval origin. Among the earliest pieces, the reliefs with *Nike* and a female figure (E 4, E 5) are in the style of the Panathenaic frieze of the Parthenon, the drapery imitating that of the young girls of the eastern part of the frieze.[19] The satyr (N 7) [11] derives from the Lysippan type, suggesting a date no earlier than 300 BC. To tell from the sharply drawn folds the male with a shield (E 10) [10] is archaising, first century B.C.-A.D., and the woman in profile view next to the double cross (W 10) [13] is also likely to belong to this period.[20] Based on hairstyle and fashion of dress, the stele with two women (N 18) [12] dates towards 200 A.D.[21] The Corinthian ante-capitals [13] on the front find their closest match on the Arch of Hadrian, ca. 120-140 A.D. To the early Christian period may be assigned some ornaments, such as the palmetto frieze of the eastern side (E, 3, 15).

Even though middle Byzantine reliefs are notoriously difficult to date with precision, it is apparent that the reused pieces represent the output of several centuries of Athenian sculpture.[22] To the 9th or 10th century belongs, among others, the closure slab with an orthogonal design of stylized palmettos (N 21) [15]. This has an almost identical twin in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens [16]. The foliate cross in aedicula reused on the western lintel (W 18) is comparable to 10th century works, and the combination of astragal, cable and rope pattern (S 7) is closely matched on a relief from the 10th century.[23] The slabs with fantastic animals heraldically flanking the tree of life show the influence of Eastern textiles. Specifically the sphinx with the elegant jewelled collar (W 13) [24] finds a counterpart in a fragmentary relief from the 10th to 11th century.[24] On the eastern wall, the circular interlaced panel (E 21) is comparable to a slab with an eight-petalled rosette in the centre, carved in the 10th to 11th century and which stems from the church in the Horologion of Kyrrhestes.[25] The leaved cross with rosettes (N 20) and the distinctive interlaced cross (W 5) can be compared with 11th century works.[26] The intricate interlaced lozenge is typical of eleventh century art, examples can be found in most parts of the Byzantine world, Athens, Thessaloniki, Constantinople and, for instance, Bari.[27]

Since the *spolia* provide a *terminus post quem* for the building of the church, it is imperative to establish a more precise date for the latest reliefs.[28] One may ascribe to the 12th century: the large panel with a tightly knit pattern of interlaced stylized acanthus inscribed in squares (S 9) [7], and the angular interlaced band in one of the narthex doors, a design found also on the Acropolis.[29] All three doors leading from the inner narthex to the *naos* are framed by *spolia*.[30] The 'art nouveau'-like scroll framing both lateral doors is identical to that right above the



12. Athens, Little Metropolis, northern wall, Roman grave stele, N 18.



13. Athens, Little Metropolis, western wall, Greek grave stele, W 10.



14. Athens, Little Metropolis, western gable, panel with a cross, W 5.

door on the northern flank (N 16) [17], a design comparable to a fragment from the Monastery of Ag. Ioannou tou Kynegou at Hymettos, which is dated by inscription to 1205.[31] That these frames are also *spolia* can be gathered from the fact that the block over the southern door was too short and had to be extended with a small fragment with a different ornament. The symmetrical design and rather thick strands of the scroll on the central lintel bring to mind works assigned to the 12th or 13th century.[32] Similarly, the scroll on the block below belongs more or less to this same period.[33] The graphic light-dark design is reminiscent of wood-carving, for it is extremely simplified, with a strictly symmetrical floral element; it finds correspondence in works from the 13th century, e.g., a fragment from Aphendiko at Mistra. The flat design displaying Arabic influence is typical of the 13th to 14th centuries, although it does appear earlier.[34] André Grabar placed this ornament in the 12th century, although he did concede that it was also seen later.[35] All in all, it would appear that the latest spolia found on the interior and exterior date from around 1200 or later and that they were subsequently at some point in time reused in the church of the Panagia Gorgoepikoos.

REASONS FOR REUSE

In his short discussion a century ago of a selected number of the *spolia* in the Little Metropolis, Paul Steiner concluded that the main impetus behind the reuse probably was «*der rein decorative Zweck*».[36] From the historiographical point of view, it is interesting to observe the changing attitudes to a cultural phenomenon like *spolia*. In 1906 one tended to take a 'positivist' view; a hundred years later, one is inclined to search for meaning, for complicated messages woven into the texture of the masonry. Reuse, as explored in a large number of recent publications dealing with the popular topic of *spolia*, is perceived in the light of ideology, magic, exorcism, appropriation, citation, nostalgia, memory, triumphalism and historical awareness.[37]

On the most basic level one can explain reuse – in the Little Metropolis and elsewhere – as a discount solution: the builders simply made use of some very usable, handy blocks that happened to be available; that some of these blocks had carved reliefs was an extra bonus. Earlier scholarship perceived the use of architectural *spolia* as the second best solution: if the builders had been able to procure new material, they would not have reused old. This is a line of thought that stresses the negative role of *spolia*, for, they are not perceived as something valuable and significant in themselves.[38] However, had material reuse been the main point at Athens, the builders could simply have turned the blocks around and hid the carvings and inscriptions, or steered clear altogether of potentially offensive themes. Furthermore, a discount solution for the Panagia Gorgoepikoos does not take into account the ostentatious, almost exhibitionistic display of images. Also, the incorporation of these various *spolia* was hardly an act of convenience, as quite an effort must have been made to select, transport, cut to size and finally reposition the stones in order to make them fit into a new context. To go through this trouble suggests that the *spolia* were significant.



15. Athens, Little Metropolis, northern wall, panel with orthogonal design, N 21.



16. Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum, panel with orthogonal design.

17. Athens, Little Metropolis, northern wall, ornaments on door frame, N 16.

On the next level one could see, with Steiner, the incorporation of sculpted stones as a way of embellishing the church. That the reliefs, some of which are of a high quality, are decorative cannot be denied, but, in all likelihood, this was not their main function. If it were, one would hardly have placed some pieces upside down. Therefore, in addition to practical and aesthetical reasons, there must have been some kind of ideological framework within which the reused blocks of the Gorgoepikoos find their explanation.

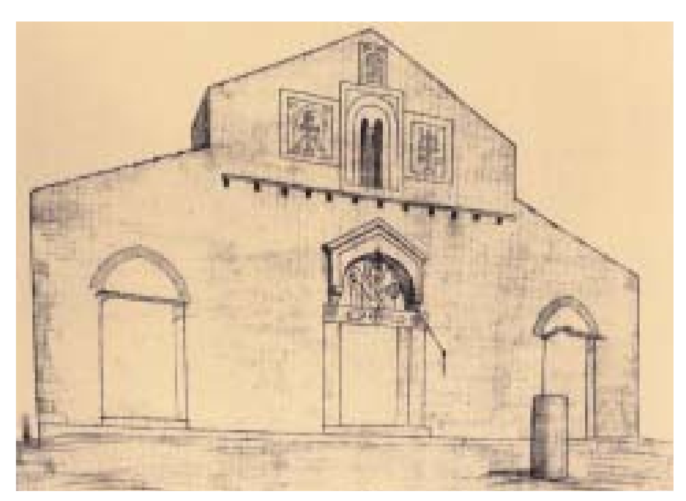
Henry Maguire is one of the few who have tried to find a solution. Discussing the church in a short article, Maguire points to the apotropaic significance of many of the subjects, such as crosses, fierce animals [18], and magic squares and circles.[39] To neutralize a potentially dangerous piece and turn its powers from negative to positive could be done by the apotropaic powers of the cross. When potentially menacing forces were neutralized by being consecrated, they were no longer harmful, but could serve to protect the church against



18. *Athens, Little Metropolis, eastern wall, panel showing lion and deer, E 8, and panel with inscriptions, E 6.*



19. *Athens, Little Metropolis, southwest corner, ashlar blocks.*



20. *Athens, Church of Ioannes o Magoutes, drawing by Paul Durand 1843 (after:* Byzantine Athens Calendar, *Athens 2004, fig. 13).*

evil. The thesis of magical protection certainly is attractive, but while it would have been an adjunct and important reason, it could hardly have been the main motivating force behind this multitude of *spolia*: for in order to secure magical protection, a single or a few crosses would have been sufficient. Thus one cannot help feeling that the builders have almost overdone it.

Another type of explanation sees *spolia* as a way to create a link to the past and to establish lines of continuity with the present: The display of *spolia* in the Little Metropolis might represent a nostalgic reference to the glorious past of Athens, the Byzantines projecting themselves as the heirs of the classical tradition.[40] Cyril Mango has spoken of «*relics of the past*», a past one admires but cannot quite expound: «[...] *exposer en tant que reliques d'une Antiquité qu'on admire sans pouvoir la définir*».[41] Similarly Charalambos Bouras defines the church as a «*mimesis of an 'archaic' building*», a structure that expresses a nostalgia for the greatness of Classical Athens.[42] Most recently Amy Papalexandrou stresses the «*appreciation for antiquities as a visual link to a great past*».[43] In connection with the idea of nostalgia, one name in particular has been evoked, that of the Metropolitan Michael Choniates.

MICHAEL CHONIATES' LAMENT

In spite of the fact that no evidence connects him with the church, the learned Metropolitan Michael Choniates (1182-1204) is often assumed to have commissioned the Little Metropolis. This idea, first suggested by Manuel Chatzidakis, is especially favoured by Greek scholars.[44] On account of his erudition and his admiration for the past, Choniates seemed a likely candidate.

The brother of the historian Niketas, Michael Choniates was born at Chonai (Kolossai) in Phrygia in 1138. He came as a youth to Constantinople where he received a thorough education. In 1182 he was appointed Metropolitan of Athens. Following the Frankish invasion in 1204 he went first to Thessaloniki, and then went into voluntary exile in 1205 on the island of Keos. He left Keos in 1217, and lived in a monastery near Thermopylae until his death in 1222.[45] A man of letters and great admirer of Antiquity, he possessed a library and left behind homilies, poems and many letters.[46]

About 181 letters survive, roughly half of which were written in his Athenian period. Would anything in these hint that this was a man liable to design a patchwork church out of *spolia*? The main content of the letters is Michael lamenting his fate: he sorely misses Constantinople. To live in Athens almost at the end of the world is awful. Compared to the sophisticated inhabitants of Constantinople, the Athenians appear to him uncouth peasants. Athens is a backwater, and nothing is left of its former grandeur. The Athenians speak in a Barbarian way (letters 28 and 52), there is material and spiritual poverty (letter 8), even the wine is bad (letter 19). Pirates and taxes are making life even harder. Complaining about the *tempora et mores* seems to be the common tenor of the letters. His style has been described as: «*Ausgefeilter Wortschatz, Hapaxlegomena und viele seltene Wörter (mit vorliebe Komposita), komplizierte Satzordnung, Zahlreiche Zitate, Anspeilungen und Reminiszenzen aus der antiken und christlichen Literatur sind die Hauptcharakteristika von Sprache und Stil des Choniates, die Wirkungsvoll zur hochstilisierten Beredsamkeit und zum erstrebten Attizismus beitragen*».[47] Is it possible to state a parallel case for material 'citationism' of antique and Christian visual images?

While he cites ancient authors, and makes frequent references to great names of the past, like Homer, Sophokles, Euripides, Demosthenes, and many others, Choniates hardly mentions a single artist or work of art. There is no reference, for instance, to Phidias or Praxiteles. In general, the Metropolitan does not express interest in the visual arts, the possible exception being the poem 'Lament from Athens',

where he conjures up an image of his love of the old city.[48] As to churches he mentions very few and never from the point of view of art and architecture. It somehow seems difficult to imagine «*der eingebildete und verständnislose*»[49] Metropolitan concerned with collecting reliefs for a church as a monument to the past. And had he done so in order to make a statement, one might have expected some kind of signature: his name inscribed, or some reference in his writings to this architectural enterprise. Let us take a brief look at his letters.

Michael Choniates refers to the Eleusinian mysteries in letter 8 (line 30f), and further in letters 20 and 28. Over the southern door is part of an Eleusinian frieze (S 18) [9]. If one strains the evidence, the relief showing eagle and hare (S 22) [2] could be related to his mention of the hare (*lagos*) being dangerous to the monks, because it eats the vegetables (letter 30, lines 64-66). A tripod is depicted on the eastern side [4] and Michael mentions tripods in letter 106 (line 22). The complaint about the wine brings to mind the relief showing *oinochoai* (N 9). This parallelism nonetheless seems farfetched and contrived. In sum, the admirer of the Constantinopolitan Hagia Sophia who found comfort in the church of the Parthenon (*theometer temenos*, letter 20) does not strike one as the kind of man who would have found the design of the Little Metropolis, a hotchpotch of various styles, something worth of admiration, and one can hardly imagine him conjuring up this almost post-modern display, completely out of tune with the era in which he lived.

When Michael was elected Metropolitan, he held his inaugural speech in the Panagia Atheniotissa (Parthenon), which then was the metropolitan church of Athens. Disappointed with Athens and the Athenians he claimed that «The generation that loved science has passed away».[50] If Michael Choniates had wanted to express his great esteem for Antiquity, would he have done so by turning ancient images and inscriptions upside down? Also the grandeur of ancient Athens would hardly be found in a mutilated satyr, one and a half archaistic males, a Roman grave stele and fragments of a few other ancient reliefs. What is most important: the majority of the *spolia* are not ancient Greek material, but are from middle Byzantine works, thus they more or less represent the very Athens that Michael was so disappointed with.[51] Further, since the latest *spolia* belong to the period of Choniates, if not later, this material is unlikely to have been available for recycling while he was archbishop: after all it is time and the calamities happening over time that make material available for reuse.

THE NATURE AND 'STYLE' OF *SPOLIA*

Use of *spolia* conforms to various patterns.[52] Practical reuse of material in the form of bricks, stones and sculpture is normal in Byzantine churches.[53] Umberto Eco refers to the reuse of *materia informe* (e.g. the melting down of a statue for the sake of the metal, or dilapidation of a derelict building) as opposed to *materia forme*, *spolia* which are recognizable as distinctive forms.[54] Yet there are always exceptions and borderline cases: dilapidated building material need neither be without form, nor without meaning. In the Little Metropolis, the viewer might perceive – and the commissioner may have intended – the ashlar blocks as more than simply stones; they are indeed eloquent signs, which bring to mind the architecture of Classical Athens [19].[55] In short, the potential meaning of the exterior is not necessarily confined to the sculpted blocks but starts at ground level. Nonetheless, there is a basic difference between structural *spolia* (e.g., columns, blocks, building material), most of which can be classified under the *materia informe* category, and figural *spolia* (sculpted reliefs). The first is attested in various Greek churches in the form of blocks inserted for structural reinforcement, but the latter are far less frequent.

When the odd sculpted *spolium* turns up on the exterior of Greek churches, the church most often stems from the period of Latin rule. To cite a few examples: At Baros, in Northern Macedonia, the Church of Ag. Nikolaos epigraphically dated to 1298 shows a few reused blocks in the lower part of the walls.[56] In Mani, the 13th century Ag. Ioannis at Keria has some scattered ornamental fragments, but the characteristic feature is its use of *materia informe*, its «almost complete dependence on earlier structures for its building material».[57] A small 14th century church at Batheia, Euboia, also displays reused blocks as well as some sculpted reliefs.[58] In the Church of Blachernai, east of Glarentza on the Peloponnese, the *spolia* are placed in the upper part of the church. The Gothic windows indicate the Frankish date of this building-phase.[59] In the 12th or rather 13th century Church of the Virgin at Merbaka in the Argolis, the lower part of the wall is built of large, reused marble blocks, perhaps from the sanctuary of Hera at Argos, while the upper part of the wall displays the odd *spolium*, such as two grave reliefs.[60] Much material, ranging from capitals to reliefs, has been reused at Merbaka. However, the display is discreet; one has to look hard to notice most of these fragments, which constitute merely a small percentage of the wall surface and function mainly as visual accents. This contrasts highly with Panagia Gorgoepikoos, where the *spolia* are the main defining feature of the walls. All in all, in the churches mentioned above reuse is mostly of the *materia informe* category. As far as the evidence goes, sculpted *spolia* are far less common in the East than in the West, where they were widely used from late antiquity and into the Renaissance.[61]

In Athens the church of Ioannes o Magoutes, in its original form, went back to 871. This was the first church erected after the promotion of Athens to a metropolitan see (until the 8th century the bishop of Athens was subject to the metropolitan see of Corinth). Significant changes over the years have inscribed themselves on this monument, which was pulled down in the 19th century. From the church stems a pair of marble closure panels of 11th century date. These were reused in the 12th century as noted in the inscription naming the Sporgites family, the renovators of the templon.[62] In the 13th or 14th century, the slabs came to a third use when they were incorporated, along with a few other slabs, in the exterior wall of the church. Thanks to the drawings made by Paul Durand in 1843 this second reuse has been recorded.[63] In one particular drawing, the west front of Ag. Ioannes presents four *spolia* which find counterparts in the Gorgoepikoos [20]. Flanking the window are two *spolia* each with a large cross, much in the manner they have been placed in the Gorgoepikoos (W 4, W 5). In both churches the cross on the right is of the interlaced variety. On the lintel can be seen two lions flanking a cross, and with rosettes at the ends. This block is closely comparable to the lintel of the Gorgoepikoos (W 17) [21]. Although the amount of sculpture is not anything like the plethora in the Gorgoepikoos, the display gives some evidence of increased use of *spolia* in Athens under western rule.

CYRIACUS OF ANCONA IN ATHENS

Athens had fallen to the Franks in 1204. The Franks were followed by the Catalans in 1311.[64] From 1388 until 1458 the Duchy was ruled by the Florentine house of the Acciaioli.[65] The rulers had their palace in the Propylaea, and the Church of the Parthenon, Panagia Athenotissa, still functioned as the

cathedral, only now Catholic. One of the significant events during Italian rule was that Nerio I Acciaioli, around 1388, reinstated the Greek Orthodox Archbishop, the first since Michael Choniates. The Greek bishop Dorotheos, who had been sent from Thessaloniki, moved his see to the town below the Acropolis. The church of Dionysos Areopagitou on the Areopagos is thought to have served as his metropolis, but this is uncertain.[66] When Nerio died in 1394, one of the points in his will was that the cathedral in the Parthenon should be re-embellished.[67] After some family squabbles, Antonio I Acciaioli gained possession of the Acropolis in 1403, and ruled as duke until his death in 1435, a rule that has been described as «comparatively prosperous and peaceful».[68] He was followed by Nerio II 1435-1451.[69] While Nerio II was Duke of Athens, Ciriaco dei Pizzicoli, also known as Cyriacus of Ancona, came to Greece.

Cyriacus of Ancona first visited Athens in 1436, more precisely from 7-22 April. This remarkable scholar and adventurer is one of the very first to show a scientific attitude to exploring the past.[70] In his *Commentaria* Cyriacus describes the ruined city with its landmarks, foremost the Acropolis: «I came to Athens. There I saw first the immense fortification wall everywhere collapsed, and within and outside the wall incredible buildings and houses of marble, and sacred temples and various kinds of images [...] but everything and everywhere turned into large ruins [...]».[71] He took notes of the places he saw, made sketches of sculptures and buildings, and showed a particular interest in copying inscriptions. Of the fifty-two inscriptions recorded by Cyriacus in Athens, twenty-two still exist in material form.[72] When he copied inscriptions into his diary, Cyriacus usually wrote down their location, noting, for instance, whether he found the inscription in the temple of Athena, near a city gate, outside the wall, and so on (e.g., *in agro athenarum*, *in aedes pallades*, etc.).

One inscription is of crucial importance to the present investigation. On what he refers to as a 'large marble base' (*ad marmoream magnum basim*), Cyriacus read the following names in a two-line inscription: «ΗΡΑΚΛΕΩΝ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΩΝΑΣ ΚΗΦΕΙΣΙΕΥΣ. ΔΩΡΟΘΕΑ ΙΣΙΓΕΝΟΥΣ» in the first line and in the second line: «ΜΥΡΡΙΝΟΥΣΙΟΥ ΘΥΓΑΤΗΡ» (IG III^2, 6419).[73] This inscription is preserved: it is written on the large block inserted as part of the epistyle in the western half of the south wall of the Metropolis (S 11) [22]. But Cyriacus does not even mention the church! Had he seen the inscription in its present location on the church wall, he could hardly have failed to indicate this; also given his interest in all kind of ancient images, he would plausibly have been curious of the other images and inscriptions preserved in the church. The inevitable conclusion must be that the block with the inscription was somewhere else in 1436 and accordingly that the church had not yet been built. There are further indications to support this assumption: In its present location the inscription is difficult to spot, one hardly sees it, unless one is aware of its being there.[74] The chance that Cyriacus would have noticed it had it been in the church is therefore relatively small.[75] Furthermore had some local inhabitants pointed it out to him, they would also have shown him the Greek inscriptions on the eastern wall, inscriptions that are both more conspicuous and more interesting.

But most important: Following the order in which Cyriacus' inscriptions and sketches occurs in his *Commentaria*, the inscription in question is number 36. His inscriptions nrr. 31 and 32 were recorded by the Church of Dionysos the Areopagite on the Areopagos, then Cyriacus walked to the adjacent area of the ancient *agora*, where he found nrr. 33, 34, 35 and 37.[76] It would indeed have been strange had he deviated from this route in order to make a detour for nr. 36 to the place where the Metropolis now stands – and then go back again to the agora. Thus his itinerary also suggests that in 1436 the inscription nr. 36 was not in the Metropolis, but lying about somewhere on or in the vicinity of the *agora*.[77] The evidence provided by Cyriacus indicates that in 1436 the Little Metropolis did not yet exist.

A Different Context for the Church

The Little Metropolis, the church of the Panagia Gorgoepikoos, Ag. Eleutherios, is unique; and it is not surprising that the church has been difficult to situate within the chronological, stylistic and conceptual framework of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture. While it is most often presented as a late twelfth-century construction, it has but little in common with Athenian middle Byzantine churches, and although it reproduces the general type and features of the Byzantine domed cross-in-square church, it does not find a match in Byzantine architecture. As far as the *spolia* are concerned, the latest pieces indicate that the church is unlikely to have been built before 1200. The vast amount of reused material in the Panagia Gorgoepikoos, as noted, does not conform to any known pattern of medieval spoliation, where *spolia* in ecclesiastical contexts are normally used with discretion. One might therefore suspect that the church belongs within a different context and reflects a different historical situation. This suspicion is corroborated by the eyewitness testimony of Cyriacus of Ancona from which it appears that the church is most likely to have been built after 1436. This Byzantine church then belongs to the post-Byzantine period.

During Ottoman rule Athens fell into oblivion. Some even doubted whether the city still existed, and written sources with regard to the Little Metropolis unfortunately are scarce.[78] But while it is difficult to suggest a precise date for the building of the church, the more likely moment after 1436 – the *terminus* provided by Cyriacus – is the years following 1456, when the Parthenon and many other churches were turned into mosques. These were turbulent times. In 1451 Duke of Athens Nerio II Acciaioli died and was succeeded by his infant son Francesco. Already in 1455 he was followed by another relative, Franco, whom Mahmoud II the Conqueror installed on the Acropolis. The very brief rule of Franco came to an end when the Ottomans occupied Athens in 1456. Even though the Athenians were given some privileges and granted religious freedom, when the Ottomans took over the stronghold of the Acropolis, it was inevitable that the Panagia Athenotissa was converted from a church into a mosque. The exact year is disputed, but plausibly it was in 1460 or shortly thereafter.[79]

The Virgin had lived on the Acropolis for close to a millennium. Before that the Acropolis had, for even longer, been the domicile of the virgin Athena Parthenos, whom the Virgin Mary had replaced as the protectress and patron of the city. In the mid-fifteenth century she was forced to leave the citadel along with the Latin clergy. As the Orthodox Church was restored, it seems at least a possibility that the small church which came to be known as the Little Metropolis, or the Panagia Gorgoepikoos, was built as a shrine to the expelled Virgin. The name *gorgoepikoos*, the 'swift-hearing',[80] provides a link between the Panagia Athenotissa of the Parthenon and the Panagia Gorgoepikoos in the Little Metropolis, since the Gorgoepikoos icon type is synonymous with the Athenotissa.[81] A late icon inscribed ΜΡ ΘΥ Η ΑΘΗΝΑΙΑ ΓΟΡΓΟΕΠΗΚΟΟΧ shows the Virgin as a right-hand Hodigitria.[82] The lost 12th-century apse mosaic in the Parthenon of the Virgin and child, possibly adhered to this type.[83] A material connection between the

21. Athens, Little Metropolis, western wall, lintel, W 18.



23. Athens, Acropolis, Byzantine and ancient fragments built into the southern wall after 1833, dismantled in 1888 (photo Felix Bonfils 1870, after: «Deltion tes christianikês archaiologikês etaireias», s. IV, XIII, 1985-1986, p. 161, fig. 5).



22. Athens, Little Metropolis, southern wall, two-line inscription on epistyle, S 11; see also [8].



24. Athens, Little Metropolis, western wall, panel with sphinxes flanking a tree of life, W 13.

church on the Acropolis and the Little Metropolis is suggested in a general way by the circumstance that some of the *spolia* in the latter appear to stem from the Acropolis (e.g. N 22, N 16; cf. also slabs with lozenge (S 16, S 20), cross with rosettes (W 5) and other motifs, represented in the Little Metropolis as well as found on the Acropolis).

Whether or not the Little Metropolis took over some of the functions of the church in the Parthenon, it nevertheless reflects the situation that arose with the Ottoman invasion, when the interiors of churches were dismantled, and *spolia* in the form of reliefs, slabs and blocks became available for reuse as a result of destruction.[84] Psychologically it made sense to try to safeguard

both Christian and ancient images by immuring them into the walls of a new *Ersatz*-church. To a certain extent one is reminded of the manner in which the archaeologist Kyriakos Pittakis in the 19th century collected inscriptions, reliefs and fragments that were dispersed on the Acropolis and placed them in its southern wall [23].[85] «By putting the fragments together, Pittakis attempted to prevent their removal or destruction by ignorant or malicious visitors».[86] These reliefs give an indication of the amount of sculpture, especially with Christian subjects, that had been removed from its original setting under Turkish rule.

The Little Metropolis, the church of the Panagia Gorgoepikoos, is a thesaurus of sculpture spanning more than a millennium. By reusing the old stones and displaying them ostentatiously, a church was created that is both unique and uniquely Athenian. Did the iconography carry a specific meaning? As to a thematic link between ancient and medieval, pagan and Christian, the following tentative pattern presents itself: with the peopled scroll, the various tree of life panels [24] and the calendar, the message of the front appears in a general way to relate to notions of beginning, birth, growth, life and eternity. On the southern flank without human figures, the Eleusinian frieze with the torches and poppies refers to death and resurrection. Rebirth through baptism may be indicated by *sphragis* (baptism through the sign of the cross). This is especially prevalent on the northern flank and at the northwest corner, where the women on the grave stele, the satyr and a female figure have all been 'baptised'. Finally on the eastern wall it is hardly by chance that so many sculptures – the two reliefs with wreaths [25], the one with the prizes, the choregic inscription, the two reliefs with Nikai – share the theme of victory. *In toto* this sculpted ensemble suggests the victory and triumph of Christ and His Church.



25. Athens, Little Metropolis, eastern wall, ancient panel with victory crowns, E 7.

The most prevalent sign on the *spolia* is the cross. It is presented more than fifty times on the exterior of the church, and on the northern wall, inscribes itself upon a particular large number of ancient and medieval reliefs. In this context, the many crosses – some of which were probably inserted into the ancient images long before the stones were reused in the church – were hardly due to superstitious minds fearing pagan imagery; rather, they were aimed at the Ottomans as a visual manifestation of religious identity. The Little Metropolis was a monument to Athens and the Orthodox faith in the form of a church that displayed tangible physical evidence of Athens' Byzantine and antique culture. The *spolia* with the dominant sign of the cross were markers of identity, visual reminders of Christianity, the *auctoritas* of which was rooted in antiquity.[87]

NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, the photos are by B. Kiilerich.

1 K. MICHEL, A. STRUCK, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen Athens*, «Athenische Mitteilungen», XXXI (1906), pp. 279-324; measurements, p. 285; short presentations of the church in K. KOUROUNIOTES, G.A. SOTERIOU, *Euretêrion tôn mnêmeiôn tês Ellados. I. Euretêrion tôn mesaiônikôn mnêmeiôn, 1: Athênôn*, Athens 1929, pp. 70-71; P. HETHERINGTON, *Byzantine and Medieval Greece. Churches, Castles, and Art of the Mainland and the Peloponnese*, London 1991, pp. 72-73; N. GIOLES, *Byzantinê naodomia (600-1204)*, Athens 1992, pp. 145-146; Ch. BOURAS, *Byzantinê kai metabyzantinê architektonikê stên Ellada*, Athens 2001, pp. 124 and 128, with figs. 124 and 125 on p. 123.

2 Written sources pertaining to the church only go back to the 17th century, see A. MOMMSEN, *Athenae christianae*, Leipzig 1868, no. 142, pp. 114-119: the names Gorgoepikoos, *ibid.* p. 115, Metropolis and also katholikon are attested in the 17th century. Ag. Eleutherios is used from the 18th century. With the building of the new cathedral in 1842, the church came to be referred to as the Little or the Old Metropolis. It is uncertain whether the church functioned as a metropolis, or whether it was a private chapel to the metropolitan. Parthenon was the first metropolis (F.W. DEICHMANN, *Die Basilica in Parthenon*, «Athenische Mitteilungen», LXIII-LXIV (1938-1939), pp. 127-139; a graffito from the year 693, A. ORLANDOS, E. VRANOUSIS, *Ta charagmata tou Parthenonos*, Athens 1973, no. 34). It was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, as the Virgin of Athens: Panagia ê Athênotissa; until 1204 Orthodox, after 1204 Catholic. Between 1204 and 1380s there was no Orthodox archbishop in Athens.

3 For middle Byzantine architecture, J. TRAVLOS, *Poleodomikê exelixis tôn Athênôn*, Athens 1993², pp. 149-162; BOURAS, *Byzantinikê*, pp. 83-162. For building materials, R. OUSTERHOUT, *Master Builders of Byzantium*, Princeton 1999, pp. 128-156.

4 The *spolia* are discussed or mentioned in the following works: MICHEL, STRUCK, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*; P. STEINER, *Antike Skulpturen an der Panagia Gorgoepikoos zu Athen*, «Athenische Mitteilungen», XXXI (1906), pp. 325-341; C. MANGO, *Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers», XVII (1963), pp. 55-75: 64; H. MAGUIRE, *The Cage of Crosses: Ancient and Medieval Sculptures on the 'Little Metropolis' in Athens*, in *Thymiama stê mnêmê tês Laskarinas Bouras*, Athens 1994, pp. 169-172 (reprinted in ID., *Rhetoric, Nature and Magic in Byzantine Art* (Variorum collected studies), Aldershot 1998, study no. IX); C. MANGO, *L'attitude byzantine à l'égard des antiquités gréco-romaines*, in *Byzance et les images*, ed. by A. Guillou, J. Durand, Paris 1994, pp. 95-120: 104; H. SARADI, *The Use of Ancient Spolia in Byzantine Monuments: the Archaeological and Literary Evidence*, «International Journal of the Classical Tradition», III (1997), 4, pp. 395-423: 406-409, 413-416; A. PAPALEXANDROU, *Memory Tattered and Torn: Spolia in the Heartland of Byzantine Hellenism*, in *Archaeology of Memory*, ed. by R.M. van Dyke, S.E. Alcock, Oxford 2003, pp. 56-80: 57-62; B. KIILERICH, *'Antiquus et modernus': Spolia in Medieval Art - Western, Eastern and Islamic*, in *Medioevo: il tempo degli antichi*, a cura di A.C. Quintavalle, Convegno internazionale, Parma, Sept. 2003) (in print).

5 *Spolia* were used in the Skripou church at Orchomenos, dated epigraphically to the year 873/874; M. SOTERIOU, *O naos tês Skripous Boiôtias*, «Archaiologikê Ephêmeris», 1931, pp. 119-157; P. LAZARIDIS, *Byzantina kai mesaiônika mnêmeia Boiôtias. Monê Skripous*, «Archaiologikon Deltion», XXVIII (1973), pp. 284-293; PAPALEXANDROU. *Memory*, pp. 63-75. However the *spolia* here mainly consist of reused column drums and other structural members rather than of figural decor.

6 For topography, see J. TRAVLOS, *Bildlexicon zur Topographie des antiken Athen,* Tübingen 1971.

7 As far as I am aware no monograph of the church with a thorough discussion of the individual pieces exists. The article by MICHEL & STRUCK from 1906 remains the most comprehensive, and provides descriptions, measurements and illustrations of the individual pieces.

It is obviously outdated, especially with regard to chronology. The other works mentioned in note 4 treat various aspects of the *spolia*.

8 The following description is based on study of the monument in September-November 2005 and photos taken at that and earlier occasions. Because of scaffolds on part of the northern wall, this has been more difficult to survey. My numeration differs somewhat from that of Michel, Struck, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*, which follows a continuous sequence from 1 to 99 and includes some stones without decoration.

9 H.G. Gundel, *Zodiac. Tierkreisbilder im Altertum,* Mainz 1992, pp. 97-98, no. 23 with bibliography. Suggested dates range from the third century BC to the third century AD.

10 P. Amandry, *Trépieds d'Athènes*, «Bulletin Correspondence Hellenique», C (1976), pp. 15-93: 27-28 and fig. 11 on p. 26.

11 Michel, Struck, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*, pl. XXI; A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Age, II: XIe-XIVe siècle*, Paris 1976, pl. LXX.

12 For *spolia* framing doors, see for instance S. Maria della Libera at Aquino and the Duomo at Pisa: L. de Lachanal, *Spolia. Uso e reimpiego dell'antico dal III al XIV secolo*, Milano 1995, figs. XVI and XIX; Salerno Duomo: *Rilavorazione dell'antico nel Medioevo*, a cura di M. D'Onofrio, Roma 2003, no. 18, pp. 56-60.

13 Measurements according to Michel, Struck, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*, p. 285.

14 For the notion of the 'image on the edge' in medieval art, with special regard to manuscripts, see M. Camille, *Image on the Edge: the Margins of Medieval Art,* London 1992.

15 In a different context some fragments from the triumphal column of Theodosius I, reused in the Ottoman hamam in Istanbul after 1517, have been placed upside down, plausibly in order to ridicule. For these fragments see B. Kiilerich, *Late Fourth Century Classicism in the Plastic Arts. Studies in the so-called Theodosian Renaissance*, Odense 1993, pp. 50-55; Ead., *Antiquus et modernus*.

16 See, Ø. Hjort, *Augustus Christianus - Livia Christiana:* Sphragis *and Roman Portrait Sculpture*, in *Aspects of Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium*, ed. by L. Rydén, J.O. Rosenqvist, Stockholm 1993, pp. 99-112.

17 For the attitude to the pagan past, see Mango, *Antique Beholder*; H. Saradi-Mendelovici, *Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity*, «Dumbarton Oaks Papers», XLIV (1990), pp. 47-61; L. James, *'Pray not to fall into temptation and be on your guard': Antique Statues in Christian Constantinople*, «Gesta», XXXV (1996), pp. 12-20; T.S. Scheer, *Heidnische Vergangenheit und christliche Gegenwart. Die Kultbilder der Götter in der Spätantike*, in *Epochenwandel? Kunst und Kultur zwischen Antike und Mittelalter*, ed. by F.A. Bauer, N. Zimmermann, Mainz 2001, pp. 36-44.

18 Cross on a stepped base can be seen at least from the 6th century (Tiberius I, 578-582), while the *crux gemina* turns up about a century later (coins of Justinian II, 705). E. Dinkler, E. Dinkler von Schubert, *s.v. Kreuz I*, in *Reallexikon Byzantinische Kunst*, V, Stuttgart 1995, cols. 1-219, and for the post-iconoclastic period, G. Galavaris, *s.v. Kreuz II*, Ivi, cols. 219-284. Fig. 2 in col. 26 and fig. 3 in col. 28 show the various shapes. Fig. 3, col. 29: auf Stufen no. 16, Doppel-Kreuz, no. 18. The *crux florida* and the cross with 'teardrops' are not uncommon in the 5th century, the latter, for instance, appears on coins of 422. A flared cross is attested already on the Sarigüzel sarcophagus in the late 4th century, B. Kiilerich, *The Sarigüzel Sarcophagus and Triumphal Themes in Theodosian Art*, in *Sarkophag-Studien II*, ed. by G. Koch [Marburg 1999] Mainz 2002, pp. 137-144: 142-143, pl. 53.

19 See, e.g., East III 7-17, East VII 53-56, M. Robertson, *The Parthenon Frieze*, London 1975, fig. 12.

20 For Archaizing or Archaistic sculpture, see M. Fullerton, *The Archaistic Style in Roman Statuary*, Leiden 1990.

21 Compare, for instance, stele no. 1303 in the National Museum at Athens, K. Romiopoulou, *Hellênorômaïka glypta tou ethnikou archaiologikou mouseiou*, Athens 1997, cat. no. 86: 160-180 AD.

22 For Byzantine sculpture in general, see A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines de Constantinople (IVe -Xe siècle)*, Paris 1963; Id., *Sculptures byzantines du Moyen Age, II: XIe-XIVe siècle*, Paris 1976. Further N. Firatli, *La sculpture byzantine figurée au Musée archéologique d'Istanbul*, Paris 1990.

23 M. Sklavou Mauroeide, *Glypta tou Byzantinou Mouseiou Athênôn*, Athens 1999, resp. cat. nos. 123, 141 and 136.

24 Sklavou Mauroeide, *Glypta*, no. 156.

25 *Ibid.*, no. 155.

26 E.g. *Ibid.*, nos. 183 and 202. For the motif, see D. Talbot-Rice, *The leaved Cross*, «Byzantinoslavica», XL (1950), pp. 72-81; J. Flemming, *Kreuz und Pflanzenornament*, «Byzantinoslavica», LIX (1969), pp. 88-115. Interlaced cross: Sklavou Mauroeide, *Glypta*, cat. no. 177.

27 M.M. Lovecchio, *La scultura bizantina dell'XI secolo nel Museo di San Nicola di Bari*, «Mélanges de l'École francaise de Rome, Antiquité», XCIII (1981), pp. 15-87, no. 13, fig. 12 and no. 14, fig. 13a. For lozenges, see N. Dimitrakopoulou-Skyloyanni, *Anaglypha thôrakia apo tou Byzantinou Mouseio*, «Deltion tês christianikês archaiologikês hetaireias», s. IV, XIII (1985-86), pp. 157-174, figs. 2, 7, 9-16, 21-28.

28 Except for Couchaud who in 1842 suggested a 6th century date, most early writers ascribed the church to the 13th century and Frankish rule, see Michel, Struck, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*, pp. 310-311; Michel, Struck, (*ibid.*, p. 323), lowered the date to the early 9th century; Kourouniotes, Soteriou, *Euretêrion*, p. 71, assigned the church to the 11th century. The later 12th century was proposed by M. Chatzidakis, *Monuments byzantins en Attique et Béotie*, Athens 1956, p. 23; and followed by Travlos, *Poleodomikê*, p. 151: late 12th century; Grabar, *Sculpture*, p. 99: ca 1200; Maguire, *Cage of Crosses*, p. 169: late 12th or early thirteenth century; Bouras, *Byzantinikê*, p. 128: late 12th century. Most recently the 13th century turns up again, Papalexandrou, *Memory*, p. 58, however without any arguments being presented. Cf. also A. Frantz, *A Public Building of Late Antiquity in Athens (IG II2, 5205)*, «Hesperia», XLVIII (1979), pp. 194-203: 203: «built in the early 13th century, presumably drawing on the ruins of the buildings destroyed by Leon Sgouros [...] in 1204 [...]».

29 Sklavou Mauroeide, *Glypta*, no. 204, and for the Acropolis, no. 224. This design appears also, for instance, framing a slab (pluteo) from S. Sophia at Monemvasia, ca. 1150, see most recently C. Barsanti, *Sculture mediobizantine di Monemvasia*, in *Studi in memoria di Patrizia Angiolini Martinelli*, a cura di S. Pasi, Bologna 2005, pp. 49-73: 56f., fig. 11, and the door frame fig. 3, p. 51.

30 Michel, Struck, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*, pp. 286, 292f., pl. XXI, 9-11; Grabar, *Sculpture*, p. 97, pl. LXX. Measurements according to Michel, Struck, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*, p. 286: central door 1,23 x 2,22 m; south 1,02 x 1,63 m; north 0,83 x 1,58 m.

31 L. Bouras, *Architectural Sculptures of the Twelfth and the Early Thirteenth Centuries in Greece*, «Deltion tês christianikês archaiologikês hetaireias», IV, IX (1977-1979), pp. 63-75, pl. 25,1; Sklavou Mauroeide, *Glypta*, cat. no. 257.

32 See, e.g., Sklavou Mauroeide, *Glypta*, cat. no. 258.

33 *Ibid.*, cat. no. 229-234, all assigned to the 12th century.

34 Fragment from Mistra: *ibidem*, cat. no. 291.

35 Grabar, *Sculpture*, p. 97.

36 Steiner, *Antike Skulpturen*, p. 340.

37 Books and articles on *spolia* published within the last ten years include: de Lachenal, *Spolia*; *Antike Spolien in der Architektur des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, ed. by J. Poeschke, Munich 1996; D. Kinney, *Spolia. Damnatio and renovatio memoriae*, «Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome», XLII (1997), pp. 117-148; H. Saradi, *The Use of Ancient Spolia in Byzantine Monuments: the Archaeological and Literary Evidence*, «International Journal of the Classical Tradition», III (1997), 4, pp. 395-423; A. Esch, *s.v. Reimpiego*, in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale*, IX, Roma 1998, pp. 876-883; A. Guiglia Guidobaldi, *Spolia classiche e scultura altomedievale nella chiesa dei SS. Primo e Feliciano a Leggiuno*, in *Domum tuam dilexi. Miscellanea in onore di Aldo Nestori*, Città del Vaticano 1998, pp. 451-486; *Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego nell'alto medioevo*, «XLVI Settimana di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, Spoleto, 16-21 aprile 1998», 2 voll., Spoleto 1999; P. Pensabene, *Cause e significati del reimpiego a Roma: dall'arco di Costantino alla basilica di S. Agnese f.l.m*, «Atti dell'VII congresso nazionale di archeologia cristiana [1993]», Cassino 2003, pp. 407-424; M. Fabricius Hansen, *The Eloquence of Appropriation. Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia in Early Christian Rome* («Analecta romana instituti danici, suppl.», 33), Roma 2003; R. Coates-Stevens, *Attitudes to Spolia in some late antique Texts*, in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, ed. by L. Lavan, W. Bowden, Leiden 2003, pp. 341-358; Kiilerich, *Antiquus et modernus*; A. Esch, *Wiederverwendung von Antike im Mittelalter*, Berlin 2005.

38 E.g., F.W. Deichmann, *Die Spolien in der spätantiken Architektur*, Munich 1975, pp. 98-101, cf. Id., *Il materiale di spoglie nell'architettura tardoantica*, «Corso di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina», XXIII

(1976), pp. 131-146. At much the same time others pointed to the use of *spolia* for legitimation, H. Torp, *Il Tempietto longobardo di Cividale* («Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia», VII, 2), Roma 1977, pp. 22f., 25-30.

[39] Maguire, *The Cage of Crosses*.

[40] Tentatively suggested in Kiilerich, *Antiquus et modernus*. For medieval attitudes to antiquity, see S. Settis, *Continuità, distanza, conoscenza. Tre usi dell'antico*, in *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, a cura di S. Settis, III, Torino 1986, pp. 375-486; Id., *Von* auctoritas *zu* vetustas*: die antike Kunst in mittelalterlicher Sicht*, «Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte», LI (1988), pp. 157-179.

[41] Mango, *L'attitude byzantine*, p. 104.

[42] Bouras, *Byzantinê*, p. 128.

[43] Papalexandrou, *Memory*, p. 62.

[44] Chatzidakis, *Monuments byzantins*, p. 23: «*Il n'est peut-être pas sans rapport avec la présence du métropolite Michel Choniatès, admirateur nostalgique des anciennes splendeurs d'Athènes*»; Id., *Athènes byzantine*, Athens n.d. (but ca 1958), pls. 34-51; followed by, e.g., Bouras, *Byzantinê*, p. 128; in *Byzantine Athens*, Calendar Athens 2004, the caption to fig. 36 showing a 19th century lithograph of the church reads «[...] is possibly associated with Michael Choniates, Metropolitan of Athens, who was an admirer of Antiquity»; *Byzantinê Athêna/Byzantine Athens*, ed. by N. Panselinou, Athens 2004, p. 63: «Chatzidakis associated the erection [...] with Michael Choniates, because of this literatus prelate's antiquarian interests.»

[45] G. Stadtmüller, *Michael Choniates, Metropolit von Athen (ca 1138- ca 1222)* («Orientalia christiana», XXXIII, 2: N 41), Roma 1934; *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae*, rec. F. Kolovou («Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Beroliensis», 41), Berlin - New York 2001, pp. 3*-8*, about his life and work with references. Also K.M. Setton, *A Note on Michael Choniates, Archbishop of Athens, 1182 to 1204*, «Speculum», XXI (1946), pp. 234-236.

[46] *Michaêl Akominatou tou Chôniatou ta sôzomena*, ed. by Sp.P. Lampros, Athens 1879-1880; *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae*, rec. F. Kolovou.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[48] P. Speck, *Eine byzantinische Darstellung der antiken Stadt Athen*, «Ellenika», XXVIII (1975), pp. 415-418, takes the verb *graphô* in the sense of to 'paint' rather than to 'write' and suggests that Michael Choniates refers to a painting he wanted to have made.

[49] As H. Hunger describes him, *Athen in Byzanz: Traum und Realität*, «Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik», XL (1990), pp. 43-61: 58.

[50] Lampros, *Michaêl Akominatou*, I, 93-106.

[51] K.M. Setton, *Athens in the later XIIth Century*, «Speculum», XIX (1944), pp. 179-207.

[52] B. Kiilerich, *Spolia – Twenty-Odd Reasons for Re-use*, paper presented at an international seminar, University of Bergen, October 1997.

[53] Ousterhout, *Master Builders*, pp. 140-145, stresses the practical function of *spolia* and the at times «almost indiscriminate manner», p. 142, in which stones have been reused. He does not mention the Panagia Gorgoepikoos.

[54] U. Eco, *Riflessioni sulle tecniche di citazione nel Medioevo*, in *Ideologie e pratiche del reimpiego*, pp. 461- 484. See also B. Ward-Perkins, *Re-using the architectural Legacy of the Past, "entre idéologie et pragmatisme"*, in *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. by G. Brogiolo, B. Ward-Perkins, Leiden 1999, pp. 225-244.

[55] See, R. Scranton, *Greek Walls*, Cambridge Mass. 1941.

[56] E.N. Kyriakoudis, *Ta byzantina mnêmeia tês Pelagonias*, in *Christianikê Makedonia*, Thessaloniki 2004, pp. 329-351: 333, fig. 5

[57] H. Megaw, *Byzantine Architecture in Mani*, «Annual of the British School at Athens», XXXIII (1932-1933), pp. 137-162: 160; Bouras, *Byzantinikê*, figs. 225-226.

[58] *Ibid.*, fig. 233.

[59] A.K. Orlandos, *Ai Blachernai tês Êleias*, «Archaiologikê Ephêmeris» (1923), pp. 5-35: 19-31, with a suggested date in the early 13th century, p. 33; Bouras, *Byzantinikê*, figs. 150-151; Ph. Drossogianni, *Problêmatismoi gia tên istoria tês monês Blachernôn Kyllênês ton 15. aiôna*, in *O Monachismos stên Peloponnêso 4. - 15. ai.*, Athens 2004, pp. 319-334.

[60] G. Hadji-Minaglou, *L'eglise de la Dormitorion de la Vierge à Merbaka*, Paris 1992, pp. 108ff., 132: ca 1150. 13th century: Bouras, *Byzantinikê*, figs. 198-199; M.L. Coulson, *Gothic in Greece: the architectural Sculpture of Merbaka Church*, «XXe Congrès des Études Byzantines, Paris 19-25 août 2001, Pré-actes», Paris 2001, III, p. 340; Papalexandrou, *Memory*, pp. 62-64.

[61] Compare the large amount of *spolia* in Italy surveyed by de Lachenal, *Spolia*, as opposed to the much fewer examples from Greece, including some from the 18th century and even later, as well as reuse in private houses, mentioned by Saradi, *Spolia in Byzantine*. See also above note 37 for other examples of *spolia* in the west. For the Renaissance, see the contributions in *Antike Spolien*, pp. 249-328.

[62] Sklavou Mauroeide, *Glypta*, cat. nos. 175-76, perhaps 177; in general: A. Xyngopoulos, *Ta byzantina kai tourkika mnêmeia tôn Athenôn*, in *Euretêrion Mesaiônikôn Mnêmeiôn tês Ellados*, II (1929), pp. 57-122.

[63] T. Kalantzopoulou, *Mesaiônikoi naoi tês Athênas apo sôzomena schedia tou Paul Durand*, Athens 2002 (not available). Durand's drawing of the west front is also depicted in the calendar *Byzantine Athens*, 2004, fig. 13.

[64] K.M. Setton, *Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-1388*, Cambridge Mass. 1948. For the history of Athens in the Middle Ages, F. Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Athen im Mittelalter*, I-II, Stuttgart 1889 remains fundamental. See further: *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, 1, *Byzantium and its Neighbours*, Cambridge 1966; K.M. Setton, *Athens in the Middle Ages* («Collected studies»), London 1975.

[65] Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, II, pp. 341-356 and *passim*; K.M. Setton, *The Catalans and Florentines in Greece, 1380-1462*, in Id., *Athens in the Middle Ages*, pp. 225-277; P. Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean 1204-1500*, London 1995.

[66] Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, II, pp. 226-227.

[67] Lock, *The Franks*, p. 131.

[68] Setton, *The Catalans and Florentines*, p. 268.

[69] Gregorovius, *Geschichte*; Setton, *The Catalans*; Lock, *The Franks*, pp. 133-134.

[70] Various aspects of Cyriacus' life and work are discussed in *Ciriaco d'Ancona e la cultura antiquaria dell'Umanesimo*, «Atti del convegno internazionale, Ancona 6-9 febbraio 1992», a cura di G. Paci, S. Sconocchia, Reggio Emilia 1998, see esp. the sections dealing with *Ciriaco e l'archeologia della Grecia*, pp. 83-144, and *Ciriaco e l'esplorazione epigrafica*, pp. 147-196; for a short outline, see also P. MacKendrick, *A Renaissance Odyssey, the Life of Cyriacus of Ancona*, «Classica et Mediaevalia», XIII (1952), pp. 131-154.

[71] E.W. Bodnar, S.J., *Cyriacus of Ancona and Athens* («Coll. Latomus», 43), Brussels 1960, esp. pp. 35-40, (Latin text cited on p. 35); L. Beschi, *I disegni ateniesi di Ciriaco: analisi di una tradizione*, in *Ciriaco d'Ancona*, pp. 83-102; F. Mallouchou-Tufano, *Parthenon from Cyriacos of Ancona to Frédéric Boisson*, in *The Parthenon and its Impact in modern Times*, ed. by P. Tournikotis, Athens 1994, pp. 162-199.

[72] Bodnar, *Cyriacus*, p. 131. The inscriptions of Cyriacus was first published by Carolus Moroni, librarian to Cardinal Francesco Barberini, then came the Roman edition of 1747: *Inscriptiones seu epigrammata graeca et latina reperta per Illyricum a Cyriaco Anconitano*. Also *Kyriaci Anconitani Itinerarium*, ed. by L. Mehus, Firenze 1782.

[73] *Inscriptiones Graecae, ed. Minor: Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriores*, III, 2, Berlin 1940, no. 6419 (III 1736); Bodnar, *Cyriacus*, p. 179.

[74] The inscription only came to my attention when I studied the digital photos in close-up on the PC-screen.

[75] It was seen in the church and recorded by George Wheler in 1674: Wheler ms., f. 44v, n. 284; cf. J. Spon, G. Wheler, *Voyages d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce, et du Levant, fait aux années 1675 et 1676,* Lyon 1682.

[76] See the drawing by Bodnar, *Cyriacus*, pl. III, p. 36.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 180, «Since this church dates from the 11th century, the inscription must have been there when Cyriacus saw it, yet he gives no such indication ».

[78] For Athens under Turkish rule, see Th.N. Philadelpheus, *Istoria tôn Athênôn epi tourkokratias apo tou 1400 mechri tou 1800*, Athens 1902; P. Michalopoulos, *Ai Athênai tês Tourkokratias (1500-1767)*, Athens 1941; D. Gerontas, *Istoria tôn Athênôn, Tourkokratia*, Athens 1969. It was not until the 17th century that western travellers with antiquarian interests followed in the trail of Cyriacus. Probably one of the first to note the Little Metropolis was George Wheler in 1674: Wheler, ms., f. 44v, n. 284; G. Wheler, Esq., in the company of Dr. Spon of Lyons, *A Journey into Greece*, London 1682. The earliest extant depictions of the church appear to date from around 1840-1850: an engraving by Theodore du Moncel, see *Great Travellers in Athens* («Museum of the City of Athens»), Athens 2004, fig. on p. 86; the drawings by Paul

Durand, Kalantzopoulou, *Mesaiônikoi naoi;* and by J. Gailhabaud, *Monuments anciens et modernes*, Paris 1850-1852, see Kourouniotes, Soteriou, *Euretêrion*, figs. 58, 60.

79 Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, I, p. 396: ca. 1460; N. Nikoloudis, *Neotêres ereunes gia tên othômanikê kataktisê tês Athênas* (1994), reprinted in Id., *Attikê kai ta nêsia tou Aigaiou ston Mesaiôna kai tên Tourkokratia*, Thessaloniki 2004, pp. 33-40, argues for 1466 as the year when the Parthenon became a mosque; this is mainly based on the «anonymous Ambrosianus», E. Ziebarth, *Ein griechischer Reisebericht des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts*, «Athenische Mitteilungen», XXIV (1899), pp. 72-88; L. Beschi, *L'Anonimo Ambrosiano: un itinerario in Grecia di Urbano Bolzano*, «Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei», XXXIX (1984), 1-2, pp. 1-19. Other suggested years are 1456 and 1458. For an outline of Parthenon's later history, see M. Korres, *The Parthenon from Antiquity to the Present*, in *The Parthenon and its Impact*, pp. 136-161; and most recently, R. Ousterhout, *'Bestride the Very Peak of Heaven', The Parthenon after Antiquity*, in *The Parthenon from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by J. Neils, Cambridge 2005, pp. 293-329.

80 The word *gorgos* has the double meaning of grim, terrible, fierce, and spirited, vigorous. Athena wore the gorgoneion on her aegis, and among her many epithets were *gorgophona*, *gorgôpis* and simply *gorgô,* W.H. Roscher, *s.v. Athene*, in Id., *Griechischen und römischen Mythologie* I, 1, Leipzig 1884, pp. 675-687: 677. In fact, the gorgon Medusa and Athena may originally have been one and the same divinity: Athena Medusa, roughly meaning queen Athena (*medeousa*, reigning), cf. W. Dörpfeld, *Athena Athenon Medeousa*, «Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts», LII (1937), pp. 220ff. The gorgon also features on the Old temple of Athena on the Acropolis, as well as in the Geometric period, for the latter see E. Touloupa, *Une Gorgone en bronze de l'Acropole*, «Bulletin correspondence hellenique», XCIII (1969), pp. 862-870.

81 N.P. Kondakov, *Ikonografia bogomateri*, II, Petrograd 1915, pp. 267-269.

82 D.G. Kampouroglou, *Panagia tôn Athenôn*, «Deltion tês christianikês archaiologikês hetaireias», II (1894), pp. 80-81 fig. at p. 80; Kondakov, *Ikonografia*, fig. 147.

83 T. Neroutsos, *Athênai christianikai 1: Ai ekklêsiai Athênôn*, «Deltion tês istorikês kai ethnologikês etaireias», III (1889-1891), pp. 5-107, frequently mentions *Mêtêr theou ê Athêna Gorgoepêkoos*, pp. 24, 50, 68, etc., without unfortunately providing references; cf. also Michel, Struck, *Die mittelbyzantinische Kirchen*, pp. 318f. The mosaic in the Parthenon is mentioned by a traveller in ca. 1588/1589, Reinhold Lubenau: «*In vorgedachter Moskea stehet auf mosaische Ahrt von Glas ein Marienbilde mit Jhesu in den Armen; dieses geben die Griechen vor, das es die Turcken haben wollen aushacken; aber der Turcke, der es hab thuen wollen, sei verlahmet*», *Beschreibung der Stadt Athen*, ch. 23 (MS. P. 654), cited in J.M. Paton, *Chapters on Medieval and Renaissance Visitors to Greek Lands*, Princeton 1951, pp. 48-49. See further Ousterhout, *Parthenon*, p. 312.

84 The availability of *spolia* also resulted in theirs being incorporated into Ottoman buildings, see, for instance, R. Ousterhout, *Ethnic Identity and Cultural Appropriation in Early Ottoman Architecture*, «Muqarnas», XII (1995), pp. 48-62.

85 See Dimitrakopoulou-Skylogianni, *Anaglypha thôrakia*, figs. 4-6.

86 T. Tanoulas, *The Propylaea of the Acropolis at Athens since the seventeenth Century*, «Jahrbuch des deutschen archaölogischen Instituts», CII (1987), pp. 413-483: 470 n. 111; K.S. Pittakis, *L'ancienne Athènes*, Athens 1835; P. Kavvadias, G. Kawerau, *Die Ausgrabungen der Akropolis*, Athens 1907, pp. 15-16. The fragments dismantled by P. Kavvadias in 1888 came to respectively the National Archaeological Museum and the so-called Theseion Collection, from where they were subsequently transferred to the Byzantine Museum at Athens.

87 I should especially like to thank l'École française d'Athènes for access to its library in autumn 2005. Thanks also to Hjalmar Torp for checking exterior measurements and for discussions in front of the monument.

Alla ricerca del significato degli *spolia* nella Piccola Metropolis di Atene

Bente Kiilerich

La chiesa della Panaria Gorgoepikoos di Atene, meglio nota come Piccola Metropolis, è costituita quasi interamente da elementi di spoglio. Questi consistono in ampi blocchi di marmo e in circa un centinaio di rilievi bizantini e antichi. L'edificio non trova termini di confronto nel panorama dell'architettura bizantina e le datazioni finora proposte oscillano dal IX al XIII secolo. L'orientamento attuale prevalente propende per una datazione al tardo XII secolo, basandosi in particolare sul presupposto che l'edificio rifletta il gusto antiquario dell'erudito Metropolita Michele Choniates (1182-1204). In questa sede si mira a una differente conclusione attraverso l'esame della cronologia e del significato della chiesa.

Dopo la presentazione degli *spolia*, l'articolo affronta i criteri della loro disposizione, e la questione della rilavorazione di alcuni pezzi antichi. Vengono precisate le ragioni suggerite del riuso: pratiche, decorative, apotropaiche e nostalgiche. Per quanto riguarda Michele Choniates, si è messo in luce come in realtà non esistano indicazioni nei suoi scritti tali da far presumere una committenza da parte sua. Inoltre alcuni degli *spolia* forse postdatano il suo periodo di attività.

Un elemento determinante per la datazione della chiesa è offerto da una fonte inaspettata. Ciriaco di Ancona visitò Atene nell'aprile del 1436. Durante il soggiorno ebbe modo di copiare diverse iscrizioni antiche. Una di queste è di particolare importanza, dal momento che si riferisce ad una iscrizione incisa su un rilievo di spoglio (S 11) situato nella parte superiore della parete meridionale della Piccola Metropolis [8, 22].

Ciriaco tuttavia non menziona mai la chiesa. Il testo fu trascritto da una grande base di marmo studiata nell'area dell'agora greca. L'inevitabile, quanto stupefacente, conclusione è che nel 1436 la Piccola Metropolis non era stata ancora costruita.

In seguito all'invasione ottomana di Atene del 1456 la trasformazione di diverse chiese in moschee rese disponibile molto materiale per il riuso. Edificare una chiesa con materiale di spoglio poteva essere un modo per conservare gli stessi reperti. Gli Ottomani presero il controllo dell'Acropoli e intorno al 1460 la chiesa metropolitana della Vergine, la Panaria Athenotissa del Partenone, fu trasformata in moschea. Basandosi sulla circostanza che la Panagia Gorgoepikoos è identica alla Panagia Athenotissa, si ipotizza che la Piccola Metropolis, la chiesa del Gorgoepikoos, potesse essere stata eretta come una sorta di chiesa in sostituzione di quella del Partenone.

Il segno maggiormente ricorrente sui rilievi di spoglio è la croce. Un altro tema importante è quello della vita eterna e della resurrezione, tema che culmina, sulla parete orientale, nei numerosi rilievi con immagini e iscrizioni relative alla vittoria e al trionfo. Se la chiesa della Piccola Metropolis fu costruita davvero tardi come ipotizzato nel 1460 circa, gli spolia acquisterebbero un nuovo significato: i rilievi bizantini e antichi recuperati costituirebbero segni distintivi di una identità, memoria visibile della Cristianità, la cui *auctoritas* affonda le sue radici nell'antichità.